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Urban School Systems Without Lunch Service as a Potential Market For Foods

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

Market Development Research Division

PREFACE

The objective of this study was to determine numbers, scope, and characteristics of urban public school systems currently without noonday lunch services, and the extent to which school feeding may be initiated in such systems within 3 years. It is part of a comprehensive program of research aimed at expanding domestic markets for agricultural products through public efforts such as school lunch programs.

Appreciation is expressed to Federal, State, and local officials concerned with school feeding who assisted in the study. Special acknowledgement is given to Samuel C. Vanneman and Leonard Garroway, Food Distribution Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, for their guidance and cooperation in the planning phases.

This study was conducted under the supervision of Robert B. Reese.

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URBAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS WITHOUT LUNCH SERVICE AS A POTENTIAL MARKET FOR FOODS

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SUMMARY

Most urban public school systems offer a lunch service in at least part of their schools. However, in a number of the large metropolitan areas there are substantial numbers of older schools that do not have lunch facilities. This study concerns the relatively few urban systems which do not offer any lunch service to pupils. As of March 1960, 124 school systems in cities of 10,000 or more persons were without school lunch services of any kind except service of milk. About 1,100 such schools were in the 124 systems. This is based on information provided by school lunch directors in the 50 States. By 1963, one-half of the 124 systems will be serving lunches in some schools, according to a survey of the school systems. Lunchroom facilities, however, will become available in only 154 schools serving 1 of 5 pupils enrolled in these school systems within the 3 years.

School systems without any lunch services were concentrated mostly in the Northeast, especially in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Illinois.

About 60 percent of the Nation's 106,000 public schools provide lunch services for their pupils, according to data collected by the Bureau of the Census. Only 1,100 schools, or slightly over 2 percent of the remaining 45,000 schools without lunch facilities, were found in the urban systems studied. Enrollment in the 1,100 urban schools totaled 439,000 or 7 percent of that in the 45,000 public schools without lunch facilities. Thus, future expansion in school feeding of urban children must occur primarily in cities where the school systems currently are offering food services in a portion of their schools.

Proximity of home to the school in the 124 cities appears to have been the primary reason for not installing school lunchrooms. A majority of pupils customarily went home for noon meals. Most of the remainder carried home-packed lunches. Relatively few children obtained lunches regularly from commercial feeding establishments.

Shortage of space, also, was a deterrent to the establishment of school feeding facilities. Nearly two-thirds of the schools in these urban systems lacked adequate space for installation of feeding services. The space problem was particularly acute among smaller schools with less than 250 pupils.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Detailed information concerning school systems without noonday lunch services is lacking. The purpose of this study was to determine characteristics of one segment, the urban systems without school feeding services, and their plans for installations of lunch services. This information will provide further delineation concerning the relative importance of a second group--urban school systems offering partial lunch services. Also, plans of the systems studied provide an indicator as to possible changes in the other, and larger, urban school category.

The universe of school systems, in cities of 10,000 or more persons, which offer no school lunch services was developed in cooperation with Federal, State, and local officials concerned with the National School Lunch Program. Replies were obtained from 112 of the 124 urban school systems contacted by mail questionnaire. From this 90 percent sample, regional estimates as to the universe were developed. These regional aggregates provided the basis for national estimates. Future trends are based on data provided by the systems studied.

There are 3 general categories of schools without noonday lunch services--small independent schools, schools in systems which have established feeding services in a portion of their schools, and those in systems which provide no lunchroom facilities.

As of March 1957, complete plate lunches, under the National School Lunch Program, were served in approximately 53,000 public elementary and high schools with an enrollment of 22 million pupils. In program schools, the daily average number of lunches served is about half of the average daily attendance. Thus, about 30 percent of the children attending the Nation's public schools participate in the National School Lunch Program. Other plate lunches or a la carte food services were made available in an additional 8,000 public schools to approximately 4 million public school children. No noonday food services, however, were provided in over 45,000 schools with an enrollment of approximately 6.4 million pupils. 1/

In addition to the public schools, there are about 16,000 nonprofit private schools in the Nation. Some 2,500 private schools in 29 States participate in the National School Lunch Program under agreements with the Food Distribution Division, Agricultural Marketing Service. The number of private schools participating in the program in the remaining States is not known.

The number of noontime meals served to children under the National School Lunch Program is increasing currently at the rate of 6 percent each year. This is double the rate of expansion in public school enrollment (about 3 percent).

1/ Anderson, K. E. Participation of Schools and Pupils in School Lunch Programs in Elementary and Secondary Schools of the United States. Mktg. Res. Rpt. No. 262, U. S. Dept. Agr., August 1958.

What rate of growth will be experienced by the National School Lunch Program during the coming years? With public school enrollment projected to rise one-quarter to about 44.5 million pupils by 1970, public administrators and others concerned with school feeding need information indicating further the magnitude of the task ahead. A basic element of future growth is the extent and rapidity with which lunchroom facilities will be installed in schools and systems not currently offering such services.

FINDINGS

School Systems Without Lunchrooms

Only a small proportion of schools without noonday feeding facilities were found to be in urban school systems which did not provide any lunch services--1,089 schools of the more than 45,000 without lunch facilities. Enrollment in these urban school systems was 439,000 pupils (table 1).

Urban school systems without feeding services were found in 19 States; the greatest concentration was in the Northeast region with almost 70 percent of such schools and pupils (fig. 1). This situation was anticipated, since many of the Nation's urban centers are located in the Northeast region. Such urban school systems generally were found to be clustered in small areas within relatively few States, notably Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Illinois.

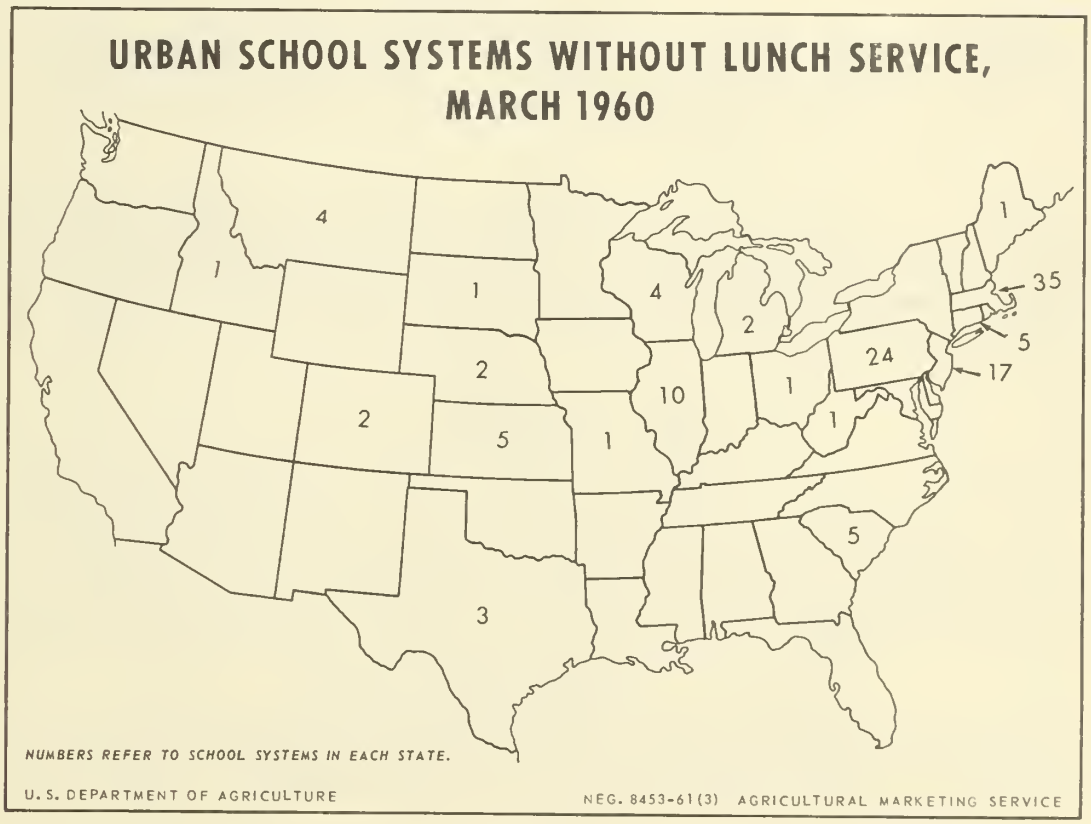

Figure 1.

School systems in all cities with populations over 170,000 offered lunch services in some or all of their schools. Most of the school systems lacking feeding facilities were found in cities of 20,000 to 170,000 population. Systems in 48 cities of this size failed to provide lunch services. These systems accounted for about 60 percent of the individual schools in this study.

School feeding is being expanded rapidly in the relatively few urban school systems currently without lunch services. By fall 1963, about one-half of these school systems plan to install feeding facilities in one or more schools. Within 3 years, school lunches will be available in 154 schools having an enrollment of more than 96,000 pupils. This is approximately 1 of 5 pupils enrolled currently in these urban systems without lunch services.

The majority of the new lunchrooms are being established in existing schools. However, in 45 instances, they will be situated in schools under construction.

Pupils' Noonday Lunching Practices

In urban systems without school feeding facilities, the usual practice for most children is to eat the noonday meal at home. In schools accounting for two-thirds of total enrollment, eating at home was the predominant practice.

Carrying lunches from home was also important. Schools with 22 percent of total enrollment reported that one-third or more of their pupils brought lunches. When commercial feeding establishments were accessible, only a few schools reported that as many as one-third of their pupils customarily patronized such facilities during the noon hours.

These data tend to bear out statements of individual school supervisors that proximity of home and school is a major factor in determining whether or not school lunch facilities will be provided. Although individual exceptions were noted, it appears that most of the schools under study were located within walking distance of the homes of most pupils.

Space Deficiencies

In existing schools, availability of space was an important limiting factor to the installation of feeding facilities. Approximately 64 percent of the schools surveyed did not have adequate space for a school lunchroom. When space was lacking, in most instances, the deficiency involved space for kitchen, food storage, and dining area. The schools tended to have either wholly inadequate space or, alternatively, enough space to carry out a lunch program.

Space was a greater problem in smaller schools. Only 28 percent of the schools with fewer than 250 pupils had sufficient space for installation of a lunchroom. In contrast, 44 percent of the schools with more than 500 pupils had such space available (table 2).

Schools in the Midwest reported more space available than those in other regions. Also, schools in larger cities tended to have fewer space problems.

Table 1.--Urban public school systems without noonday lunch service: Numbers of schools and pupils, by specific characteristics, region, and United States, March 1960 1/

Item	School systems providing-- Milk service only		No food service		Total	
	Schools	1,000 pupils	Schools	1,000 pupils	Schools	1,000 pupils
United States total	976	390	113	49	1,089	439
Region 2/:						
Northeast	740	292	37	15	777	307
Southeast	8	3	--	--	8	3
Midwest	105	45	62	28	167	73
Southwest	81	39	6	4	87	43
West	42	11	8	2	50	13
Urbanization:						
Places of 10,000 to 14,999	208	67	29	9	237	75
Places of 15,000 to 19,999	163	56	23	12	186	67
Places of 20,000 and over	605	268	61	28	666	296
Size of school system:						
Under 2,500 pupils	336	99	38	13	374	112
2,500 to 4,999 pupils	212	87	37	18	249	105
5,000 or more pupils	428	204	38	18	466	222
Grades taught:						
Elementary	253	86	76	33	329	119
Combination elementary and high	723	304	37	16	760	320

1/ Includes school systems located in cities of 10,000 or more population.
2/ Northeast: Maine, Delaware, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, West Virginia, District of Columbia, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York. Southeast: Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky. Midwest: Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin. Southwest: Kansas, Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas. West: Montana, California, Utah, Wyoming, Washington, Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, Idaho.

Table 2.--Urban public school systems without noonday lunch service: Availability of space for installation of feeding facility in schools, by enrollment, March 1960 1/

Size of school	Inadequate space for feeding installation: Total	Partial	No space problem	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Under 250 pupils	59	13	28	100
250 to 500 pupils	45	14	41	100
500 or more pupils	38	18	44	100

1/ Includes school systems located in cities of 10,000 or more population.

Milk Service

Although noonday meals were not provided, milk generally was served in the urban schools studied (table 1). School systems with a combination of elementary and secondary grades generally had milk service available. About 95 percent of the pupils in such systems attended schools serving milk. Among the elementary school systems reporting, about 77 percent had milk available in their schools.

Pupils in schools participating in the Special Milk Program drank more milk than those in nonparticipating schools. Average milk consumption in program schools was 3.4 ounces each day; whereas the rate was about 1.7 ounces in schools not participating in the Special Milk Program.

Prices paid for milk by pupils in schools under the Special Milk Program averaged 3.5 cents per half pint. Children in the nonparticipating schools paid an average of 7.7 cents per half pint. Differences in price-consumption ratios approximate relationships found in earlier studies. 2/

Milk consumption rates among children attending Special Milk Program and nonprogram schools also were similar, both nationally and regionally, to earlier findings for schools offering no lunch services (see footnote 2). In the earlier study, average milk consumption rates were highest in schools with plate lunch service. Consumption rates in schools offering milk but not lunches tended to approximate the rates found for schools offering milk and a la carte food services only, in the 1957 study.

Potential Market for Food

By fall 1963, the 154 new lunchrooms will have expanded the market for foods by approximately $2.5 million annually. 3/ About $1.4 million of this expansion will have occurred in the Northeast and another $0.4 million in the Midwest. Although this represents less than one-half of one percent of the total market for food in schools, it illustrates the quantities of food involved even in minor shifts in overall pupil participation.

Increased availability of school lunches provides an important potential source of expanding the market for food in schools. The extent of increased availability, however, is dependent to a considerable degree upon actions taken by school systems which currently provide lunch services to a portion of their schools. The urban school systems under study are providing new feeding facilities at a rapid rate. One-half of these school systems are making initial feeding installations at this time. If other schools without lunchrooms were to make such facilities available at the same rate during the 1960 decade, this expansion, plus the rising school population, would result in a market for food in public schools approaching one billion dollars by 1970.

2/ Anderson, K. E. Milk Consumption in the Nation's Schools. Mktg. Res. Rpt. No. 284, U. S. Dept. Agr., Nov. 1958.

3/ During the 1957-58 school year, the average value of food consumed was approximately $28 per pupil attending public schools with lunch programs. Anderson, K. E. The Market for Food in Public Schools. Mktg. Res. Rpt. No. 377, U. S. Dept. Agr., Jan. 1960.